



## **UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD**

December 18, 2015

The Honorable Penny Pritzker  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

Our board meeting on November 20, 2015 occurred a week after the recent tragic events in Paris. At the meeting, we offered our board's full solidarity with France and its people, as well as our prayers for healing and renewal. Cowardly acts of terrorism and violence that shake our world and our sense of security are becoming disturbingly regular events. While these events should lead us to review thoroughly whether we have the programs in place to respond appropriately to new threats, we simply cannot allow these acts of intimidation to jeopardize all that has been accomplished to increase international visitation. Equally concerning, we must not allow these acts to divert our attention from the shared priorities we as a board have carefully and thoughtfully crafted, adopted and presented to you.

One of those priorities is to expand, strengthen, and protect the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). This powerful program, which brings nearly 60% of our nation's overseas visitors, is the lynchpin of achieving our lofty international visitation goals. While the VWP employs comprehensive security features, a number of members of Congress have introduced or proposed pieces of legislation that would introduce new limitations or requirements for the VWP, and potentially would have major impacts on international visitation without commensurate increases in security.

On behalf of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, we are writing this special and urgent letter to encourage you and the Administration to continue to oppose legislation that could



undermine security and seriously disrupt international travel and commerce and to support legislation, such as H.R.158, that would preserve the VWP while strengthening security. Beyond the current legislation, we would respectfully request that you continue to monitor and champion the VWP for the security and economic well-being of our nation.

We understand that the highest priority of our government is to keep Americans safe. As you know, VWP does not detract from that goal, it advances it. Countries that join the program must share law enforcement and security-related data with the United States and maintain high counter-terrorism, law enforcement, border control and document security standards. These important attributes should not be sacrificed in response to attempts to act quickly without careful analysis. Overreactions to bad events can make for bad laws, especially when those laws are rushed through Congress.

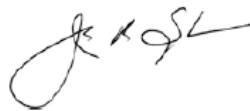
Some proposals, such as mandatory waiting periods for travel or including a biometric capture requirement before each flight for all VWP travelers, are particularly problematic. However, other measures, including specialized screening for travelers who have recently traveled to high-risk countries and expansion of the successful preclearance and Global Entry programs, are worthy of support. VWP countries should also be held to their security commitments under existing law. We are mindful that over the past year, the Administration has taken a series of steps to enhance the significant security measures in the VWP and has recently announced additional actions that will further enhance and accelerate these changes; we're also aware that the Administration is working closely with Congress to obtain statutory authority for those enhancements. We support measures aimed at improving the security elements of the VWP which also preserve the enormous contributions this vital program makes to international visitation to the United States.

As you lead the Commerce Department's "sprint to the tape" with a baton containing the priority recommendations of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, we sincerely hope that defending, and ultimately expanding, the Visa Waiver Program will remain firmly in hand. In the coming days and weeks, we urge you and the Administration to support the integrity of this key program, which does so much to contribute both to our nation's security and economic well-being. As always, the members of the TTAB stand ready to work closely with you and our government partners in our shared mission of keeping the travel and tourism industry strong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "S. Gilliland".

Sam Gilliland  
Chairman

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Sprouls".

John Sprouls  
Vice Chairman